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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TO: LEA and ISD Superintendents, Public School Academies, Public School
Academy Authorizers

FROM: Jeremy M. Hughes, Ph.D.
Chief Academic Officer/Deputy Superintendent

DATE: January 15, 2003

SUBJ: MEAP TESTING OF LIMITED ENGLISH STUDENTS

Michigan embraces the goals of NCLB and its emphasis upon the achievement of certain student groups, including limited English proficient students. Michigan supports helping such students achieve the high standards expected of all students, and supports a rigorous program of assessment to determine if these students are making adequate progress toward achieving those standards.

At the same time, districts and schools have raised grave concerns over administering the English MEAP tests this year to limited English students who have not achieved the English language proficiency to enable them to read and comprehend the MEAP tests.

The Department has “looked under every stone” for a way to accommodate these concerns, including searching for alternative tests, consulting other states’ practices, and discussing this issue in Washington with the U.S. Department of Education.

For the future, the State intends to develop or purchase alternative tests that could be used for students who are non-English proficient (NEP). In the meantime, options are limited to the points that follow.

1. All limited English proficient students must be assessed. NCLB requires an assessment in Reading and Math. MEAP policies require assessment in Social Studies and Science as well. The standard English-language MEAP tests are to be considered the primary vehicle to do this, for as many LEP students as possible.
2. LEP students who have been in the United States for three years or more **MUST** take the standard MEAP tests. There is no other option under the NCLB Act.

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3. At the present time, lacking MEAP tests in native languages, and lacking alternative tests for LEP students, districts and schools have basically two options:
 - A. Administer the MEAP tests to all LEP students.
 - OR –
 - B. Excuse some students from the testing but return their answer booklets with the special codes mentioned in the next section. The booklets will be scored as if the student was assessed (thus allowing us to meeting the 95% minimum tested regulation), and the student will receive the lowest score in each subject area.
 - C. In both the above cases, the student's earned score (point A above) or bottom score (B above) will be included in the calculation of a school's or district's AYP status.
4. For a student excused under (B) above from one or all of the MEAP tests, the school should return the student's answer folders with the letters LEPU (standing for LEP Unable To Participate) written in the blank boxes under the heading "Class/Group No." on the answer folder. In the column under the "L," the number "0" (zero) should be bubbled in.
5. The Department of Treasury is purchasing an alternative test in Reading that could be used to assess those LEP students who are considered Non-English Proficient (NEP). This alternative test would be available for administration in March.
6. Districts interested in using this test would be invited to apply to become part of the pilot. Pilot schools or districts would be selected by the Departments of Education and Treasury to be geographically and otherwise representative of the state.
7. Pilot districts would be given a new testing window in which to administer the alternative test. The testing window will be March 3-31, corresponding somewhat to the testing window for MI-Access.
8. LEP students in the pilot districts would not need to take Part II of the English/Language Arts MEAP. The student's answer folder for Part II should be returned with the letters LEPA (standing for LEP Alternate) written in the blank boxes under the heading "Class/Group No." on the answer folder. In the column under the "L," the number nine (9) should be bubbled in. The student would need to take the other parts of the ELA test as well as Math, Social Studies, and Science, unless excused under the system just described (LEPU).

9. Districts interested in using the alternative Reading test and becoming part of the pilot group should apply by email (zarkak@michigan.gov) or letter to this office (Chief Academic Officer), or to the Office of Educational Assessment in the Department of Treasury (everettp@michigan.gov) indicating the number of LEP students at grades 4 and 7 who will take the alternative test.

I want to thank all of you for your understanding, cooperation, and commitment to working with us as we attempt, first and foremost, to meet the needs of children and comply with federal and state law.